MEMORANDUM March 12, 1964

TO: CIA

FROM: The President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy

SUBJECT: Certain Questions Posed by the State Department Files

1. The State Department files reflect the fact that Oswald himself believed that he could not travel from Minsk to Moscow for the purpose of discussing his return to the United States with American officials without first obtaining the permission of Soviet officials in Minsk, and that Oswald was reluctant to seek this permission. Yet, only a few months after expressing his fears in this respect Oswald traveled to Moscow and returned, brought his wife Marina with him, and entered the American Embassy, apparently without having sought or received permission from the Soviets to do so. Is unauthorized travel of this type possible in the Soviet Union? Is it at all practical? Would Oswald normally have been apprehended during the attempt or punished after the fact for traveling without permission? Do you have any thoughts on how or why he and Marina were able to accomplish this? Are there any Soviet restrictions on persons entering the American Embassy?

2. The files of the Department of State reflect the fact that Oswald first applied for permission to remain in

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Russia permanently, or at least for a long period, when he arrived in Moscow, and that he obtained such permission within one or two months. Is this speed usual? Is the fact that he even obtained permission to stay, usual? Can you tell us what the normal procedures are under similar circumstances? Can you tell us of other cases of defectors who applied for, and/or obtained permission to stay in the Soviet Union?

3. At the time that Lee Harvey Oswald and Marina Oswald left Russia for the United States was it legal and normal under Soviet law and practice for a Russian national married to an American to be able to accompany him back to his homeland? Was the rapidity with which Lee Harvey Oswald was able to accomplish his and Marina's return to the United States in any way unusual?

4. The Soviet Government issued Lee Harvey Oswald a passport which described him as being without citizenship, and he was issued a Soviet visa on a temporary, year-to-year basis. Were these procedures normal at the time Oswald was in Russia?

5. The files of the Department of State indicate that on February 1, 1961, as the result of a call by Mrs. Marguerite Oswald, the mother of Lee Harvey Oswald, the Department of State in Washington sent a request to the American Embassy in

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Moscow that it inform the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Lee Harvey Oswald's mother was worried as to his personal safety and anxious to hear from him. Was this message ever communicated to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the American Embassy in Moscow or was it in any other way communicated to the Russian Government? Was this message encoded before being sent from Washington to the American Embassy in Moscow, or sent in some other manner designed to keep its contents hidden from Soviet intelligence?

No one in the United States and no one in the American Embassy in Moscow had heard from Lee Harvey Oswald since November 9, 1959. Yet, on February 13, 1961, the American Embassy in Moscow received the following undated letter from Oswald postmarked Minsk, February 5, and Moscow, February 11. This letter was therefore apparently mailed by Oswald only four (4) days after the American Embassy in Moscow received the foregoing message about Oswald's mother.

"Dear Sirs:

Since I have not received a reply to my letter of December 1960, I am writing again asking that you consider my request for the return of my American passport.

I desire to return to the United States, that is if we could come to some agreement concerning the dropping of any legal proceedings against me. If so, then I would be free to ask the Russian authorities to allow me to

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leave. If I could show them my American passport, I am of the opinion they would give me an exit visa.

They have at no time insisted that I take Russian citizenship. I am living here with non-permanent type papers for a foreigner.

I cannot leave Minsk without permission, therefore I am writing rather than calling in person.

I hope that in recalling the responsibility I have to America that you remember yours in doing everything you can to help me since I am an American citizen.

Sincerely,

(Signed)
Lee Harvey Oswald"

This series of events of course suggest the possibility that Russian intelligence picked up the Marguerite Oswald message, interpreted it as an indication that the United States Department of State was in a mood to forgive Oswald's previous actions and let him back into our country, and therefore directed Oswald to send the above quoted letter. In this respect it is interesting to note that the letter contains a reference to a previous letter supposedly sent in December 1960, which letter, if it ever existed, was never received by the American Embassy. This reference could possibly be a red-herring designed to divert the attention of the American Embassy from the otherwise obvious coincidence of Oswald's letter coming so soon after the Marguerite message.

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